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CHAMPIONSHIP PERFORMANCE

Address

by

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On one unforgettable afternoon in May 1935, an athlete, carrying the colors of scarlet and gray, astonished the world by breaking three world records and tying a fourth in a track meet at Ann Arbor. A year later, at the Berlin Olympics, the same Jesse Owens won four gold medals, setting three new Olympic records and equalling another.

Climaxing what some observers have described as the "golden age" of American sports, these championship performances made all Ohioans proud. They still do today.

There is, however, a sobering thought. All of Jesse Owens records have subsequently been exceeded, some of them on numerous occasions and occasionally by appreciable margins.

What I should like to suggest today is that, as with athletics, our nation, proud of its championship performances of the past, is facing stiffer competition. Old records are being broken. American mettle is being tested.

Specifically, I should like to submit two propositions which graduates of 1972 will find of increasing relevance in the years ahead: 1) We cannot rest on our laurels if America is to remain Number One; and 2) We cannot withdraw from the contest if world peace is to be achieved.

1. WE CANNOT REST ON OUR LAURELS IF AMERICA IS TO REMAIN
NUMBER ONE

One cannot spend three years in Japan without admiration and respect for that country's phenomenal progress. In a quarter of a century, what was a devastated country has risen to become the second strongest economic power in the Free World. With an annual growth rate (in real terms) around 12%, Japan's Gross National Product has more than quadrupled in the past ten years. Some futurologists predict that, even at reduced rates of growth, Japan could surpass the United States in level of per capita income by the end of this century.

Having a population one half that of the United States, Japan last year produced an impressive total of 5,800,000 automobiles, approximately 55% of the American output. Meanwhile, Japan's largest steel company, using only 23 furnaces, produced 30.5 million tons of steel, an output 24% greater than that of America's largest firm which used 69 furnaces.

Such dramatic achievements are, largely due to efficient utilization of governmental, financial and labor resources. Some advantage has also been derived from postwar recovery protectionist measures which under international pressures are gradually being relinquished. But most deeply responsible have been the dedication and sense of purpose of the Japanese people.

Many Japanese firms begin their day with a company pep song. A company, as a rule, hires young employees and in effect assures lifetime employment, with comfort and contentment. Work stoppages are rare, seldom more than a few hours in duration. One American has jocularly suggested, "The Japanese are guilty of unfair labor practices; they like to work."

The message which one brings back from Japan is clear. It is that there is no substitute for hard work. If America wishes to remain competitive in the international marketplace and influential in world affairs, we cannot rest on past laurels. We must renew our dedication, improve our productivity, and, through the performances of institutions such as this university and its graduates, retain our technological leadership. Wendell Willkie once phrased it well, "Only the productive can be strong and only the strong can be free."

2. WE CANNOT WITHDRAW FROM THE CONTEST IF WORLD PEACE IS TO
BE ACHIEVED

As in future years you 1972 graduates look back, your college years will be seen as coinciding with the closing of one chapter and the opening of another in the history of nations. The postwar world has come to an end. A new structure is needed in mankind's eternal quest for peace.

Prior to World War II, we Americans sought refuge in isolationism. Painfully, we learned that a nation possessing strength cannot avoid a role in world affairs. Without active American participation, the league of nations, whether spelled with a small or capital L, could not win in the contest for peace.

After World War II, America plunged into world affairs with vigor. We were co-founders of the United Nations. We supported the recovery of war-damaged countries, allies and foes. We fought aggression. We assisted the emerging nations.

Although the task often seemed thankless, these American endeavors were in large measure responsible for dramatic changes. Western Europe and Japan have regained economic strength and political vitality. The Communist monolith and bi-polar world are faded illusions. The newly emerging nations are increasingly self-reliant.

With such stirring developments, it is clear that all nations, including our own, are being impelled to make adjustments to the new realities of the 1970's. The United States, so long as it retains its strength, can and must play an indispensable role, but our resources are not unlimited. Other nations can and must, in greater proportion, share in the constructive effort if a peaceful international order is to be achieved.

In short, the thrust of current American foreign policy is a more balanced relationship among friends and allies and a more constructive contact with adversaries. In a sense, the struggle for peace must be a team effort. This is not incompatible with the national interests of any single country, for every nation, including our own, will be a winner if true peace can be achieved. Essential to victory in that struggle is judicious and effective performance by the United States.

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Someone once said of a certain university that it was a storehouse for knowledge because the freshman brought so much in and the seniors carried so little out.

This is not true at Ohio State. For more than a century, including particularly the past 16 exciting years of President Fawcett's outstanding leadership, this institution has been producing men and women of character and motivation, of competitive spirit and championship performance. It is these great qualities which, as time passes and change occurs, will be at the heart of the firm friendship which you graduates of 1972 have established with this campus. They will serve you well, as they will our nation.

Congratulations, good wishes, and in the words of an old Oriental greeting, "May you never grow tired."